



From Martyr to Murderer: Representations of the Assassins in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Europe

Meriem Pagès

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Ever since the publication of Orientalism, medievalists have attempted to apply Said's theses on the Western European representation of the Muslim Other to the Middle Ages. Pagès examines the sect of the Nizari Isma'ilis (known for its use of political assassination) and its complicated relationship with Western Europe, providing a fascinating case study of such an endeavor. The representation of the Nizaris, who came to be known in Europe as the Assassins, closely parallels that of Islam in the Middle Ages. However, how the sect was perceived in Latin Christendom is nuanced and complex, leading to divergent readings of the Assassins. These portrayals ranged from allies in the earliest texts to exotic "marvels of the world" in works of the thirteenth century and thereafter. By delineating how the sect's representation developed in medieval historical and literary works, *From Martyr to Murderer* shows that the Assassins did not originally inspire alienation about them in medieval Europeans reading and writing. Pagès's adroit exploration of the Assassins legend leads us to question our preconceived notions about the larger issue of the image of Islam in the Middle Ages.

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